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ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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VIXEN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXII. AT THE KENNELS.

It was a fresh sunny morning, a soft west wind blowing up all the sweetness of the woods and leas. The cattle were grouped in lazy stillness on the dewy grass; the year's pigs, grown to the hobbledehoy stage of existence, were grubbing about contentedly among the furze-bushes; by the roadside, a matronly sow lay stretched flat upon her side in the sunshine, just where carriage-wheels must pass over her, were carriages frequent in those parts.

Even the brightness of the morning had no charm for Vixen. There was no delight for her in the green solemnity of the forest glades, where the beechen pillars led the eye away into innumerable vistas, each grandly mysterious as a cathedral aisle. The sun shot golden arrows through dark boughs, patching the moss with translucent lights, vivid and clear as the lustre of emeralds. The gentle plash of the forest stream, rippling over its pebbly bed, made a tender music that was wont to seem passing sweet to Violet Tempest's ear. To-day she heard nothing, saw nothing. Her brain was clouded with angry thoughts.

She left the Forest by-and-by, following one of the familiar cart-tracks, and came out into the peaceful little colony of Beechdale, where it was a chance if the noonday traveller saw anything alive except a youthful family of pigs enjoying an oasis of mud in a dry land, or an intrusive dog rushing out of a cottage to salute the wayfarer with an enquiring bark. The children were still in school. The hum of their voices was wafted from

the open windows. The church door stood open. The village graves upon the sunward-fronting slope were bright with common flowers; the dead lying with their feet to the west, ready to stand up and see their Lord at the resurrection morning.

Vixen hurried through the little village, not wanting to see Mrs. Scobel, or anyone she knew, this morning. There was a long rustic lane opposite the church, that led straight to the kennels.

"I will go and see the foxhounds," said Vixen. "They are true and faithful. But perhaps all those I love best have been sold, or are dead by this time."

It seemed to her ages since she had been to the kennels with her father. It had been his favourite walk, out of the hunting season, and he had rarely suffered a week to pass without making his visit of inspection. Since her return Violet had carefully avoided the well-known spot; but to-day, out of the very bitterness of her heart, came a desire to renew past associations. Bullfinch was gone for ever, but the hounds at least remained; and her father had loved them almost as well as he had loved Bullfinch.

Nothing was changed at the kennels. The same feeder in corduroy and fustian came out of the cooking-house when Vixen opened the five-barred gate. The same groom was lounging in front of the stables, where the horses were kept for the huntsman and his underlings. The whole place had the same slumberous out-of-season look she remembered so well in the days when hunting was over.

The men touched their caps to Miss Tempest as she passed them. She went straight to the kennels. There were the three wooden doors, opening into three

square stone-paved yards, each door provided with a round eye-hole, through which the authorities might scrutinise the assembly within. A loud yelping arose as Vixen's footstep drew near. Then there were frantic snuffings under the doors, and a general agitation. She looked through the little eye-hole into the middle yard. Yes; there they were, fourteen or fifteen couple, tumultuously excited, as if they knew she was there: white and black-and-tan, pointed noses, beautiful intelligent eyes, bright tan spots upon marked brows, some with a streak of white running down the long sharp noses, some heavy in the jowl, some with muzzles sharp as a greyhound's, thirty tails erect and agitated.

The feeder remembered Miss Tempest perfectly, though it was more than three years since her last visit.

"Would you like to go in and see 'em, miss?" he said.

"Yes, if you please, Dawson. You have Gauntlet still, I see. That is Gauntlet, isn't it? And Dart, and Juno, and Ringlet, and Artful?"

"Yes, miss. There ain't many gone since you was here. But there's a lot o' poppies. You'd like to see the poppies, wouldn't you, miss? They be in the next kennel, if you'll just wait five minutes."

Cleanliness was the order of the day at the kennels; but to do the late master's daughter more honour, Dawson the feeder called a bright-looking lad, his subordinate, and divers pails of water were fetched, and the three little yards washed out vigorously before Miss Tempest was invited to enter. When she did go in, the yard was empty and clean as a new pin. The hounds had been sent into their house, where they were all grouped picturesquely on a bench littered with straw, looking as grave as a human parliament, and much wiser. Nothing could be more beautiful than their attitudes, or more intelligent than their countenances.

Vixen looked in at them through the barred window.

"Dear things," she exclaimed; "they are as lovely as ever. How fond papa was of them!"

And then the kennel-huntsman, who had appeared on the scene by this time, opened the door and smacked his whip; and the fourteen couple came leaping helter-skelter out into the little yard, and made a rush at Vixen, and surrounded her, and fawned upon her, and caressed her as if their recognition of her after

long years was perfect, and as if they had been breaking their hearts for her in the interval. Perhaps they would have been just as affectionate to the next comer, having a large surplus stock of love always on hand ready to be lavished on the human race; but Vixen took these demonstrations as expressive of a peculiar attachment, and was moved to tears by the warmth of this canine greeting.

"Thank God! there are some living things that love me," she exclaimed.

"Something that loves you!" cried a voice from the door of the yard. "Does not everything noble or worthy love you, as it loves all that is beautiful?"

Turning quickly, with a scared look, Violet saw Roderick Vawdrey standing in the doorway.

He stood quietly watching her, his dark eyes softened with a look of tender admiration. There could hardly have been a prettier picture than the tall girlish figure and bright chestnut head, the fair face bending over the upturned noses of the hounds as they clustered round her, some standing up with their strong white paws upon her shoulder, some nestling at her knees. Her hat had fallen off, and was being trampled under a multitude of restless feet.

Rorie came into the little yard. The huntsman cracked his whip, and the hounds went tumbling one over the other into their house, where they leaped upon their straw bed, and grouped themselves as if they had been sitting for their portraits to Sir Edwin Landseer. Two inquisitive fellows stood up with their paws upon the ledge of the barred window, and looked out at Violet and the new master.

"I did not know you were at Briarwood," she said, as they shook hands.

"I only came home last night. My first visit was naturally here. I wanted to see if everything was in good order."

"When do you begin to hunt?"

"On the 1st of October. You are going to hunt this year, of course."

"No. I have never followed the hounds since papa's death. I don't suppose I ever shall again."

"What, not with your stepfather?"

"Certainly not with Captain Winstanley."

"Then you must marry a hunting-man," said Rorie gaily. "We can't afford to lose the straightest rider in the Forest."

"I am not particularly in love with hunting—for a woman. There seems some-

thing bloodthirsty in it. And Bates says that if ladies only knew how their horses' backs get wrung in the hunting season, they would hardly have the heart to hunt. It was very nice to ride by papa's side when I was a little girl. I would have gone anywhere with him—through an Indian jungle after tigers—but I don't care about it now."

"Well, perhaps you are right; though I should hardly have expected such mature wisdom from my old playfellow, whose flowing locks used once to be the cynosure of the hunting-field. And now, Violet—I may call you Violet, may I not, as I did in the old days—at least, when I did not call you Vixen."

"That was papa's name," she said quickly. "Nobody ever calls me that now."

"I understand; I am to call you Violet. And we are to be good friends always, are we not, with a true and loyal friendship?"

"I have not so many friends that I can afford to give up one who is staunch and true," answered Violet sadly.

"And I mean to be staunch and true, believe me; and I hope, by-and-by, when you come to know Mabel, you and she will be fast friends. You may not cotton to her very easily at first, because, you see, she reads Greek, and goes in for natural science, and has a good many queer ways. But she is all that is pure-minded and noble. She has been brought up in an atmosphere of flattery. It is the only fault she has."

"I shall be very glad if she will let me like her," Violet said meekly.

They had strolled away from the kennels, into the surrounding Forest. They walked along idly, following a cart-track that led into the woody deeps, where the earliest autumn leaves were falling gently in the soft west wind. By-and-by they came to a fallen oak, lying by the side of the track, ready for barking, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world to sit down side by side on this rustic seat, and talk of days gone by, lazily watching the flickering shadows and darting sunrays in the opposite thicket or along the slanting stretch of open turf—that smooth emerald grass, so inviting to the eye, so perilous to the foot of man or beast.

"And now, Violet, tell me all about yourself, and about this second marriage of your mother's," Roderick began earnestly; "I hope you have quite reconciled yourself to the idea of it by this time."

"I have not reconciled myself; I never shall," answered Violet, with restrained anger. "I know that mamma has heaped up sorrow for herself in the days to come, and I pity her too much to be angry with her. Yes; I, who ought to look up to and respect my mother, can only look down upon her and pity her. That is a hard thing, is it not, Rorie? She has married a bad man—mean, and false, and tyrannical. Shall I tell you what he has done within these last few days?"

"Do. I hope it is not anything very bad."

Violet told how Bullfinch had been sold.

"It looks mean, certainly," said Mr. Vawdrey; "but I daresay to Captain Winstanley, as a man of the world, it might seem a foolish thing to keep a horse nobody rode; especially such a valuable horse as Bullfinch. Your father gave two hundred and fifty for him at Andover, I remember. And you really have too many horses at the Abbey House."

"Arion will be the next to be sold, I daresay."

"Oh, no, no! He could not be such an insolent scoundrel as to sell your horse. That would be too much. Besides, you will be of age in a year or two, and your own mistress."

"I shall not be of age for the next seven years. I am not to come of age till I am five-and-twenty."

"Phew!" whistled Rorie. "That's a long shot off. How is that?"

"Papa left it so in his will. It was his care of me, no doubt. He never would have believed that mamma would marry again."

"And for the next seven years you are to be in a state of tutelage, dependent on your mother for everything?"

"For everything. And that will really mean dependent upon Captain Winstanley; because I am very sure that as long as he lets mamma wear pretty dresses, she will be quite contented to let him be master of everything else."

"But if you were to marry—?"

"I suppose that would entangle or dis-entangle matters somehow. But I am not likely to marry."

"I don't see that," said Rorie. "I should think nothing was more likely."

"Allow me to be the best judge of my own business," exclaimed Vixen, looking desperately angry. "I will go so far as to say that I never shall marry!"

"Oh, very well, if you insist upon it, let it be understood so. And now Vix—"

Violet—don't you think if you could bring yourself to conciliate Captain Winstanley—to resign yourself, in fact, to the inevitable, and take things pleasantly, it would make your life happier for the next seven years? I really would try to do it, if I were you."

"I had made up my mind to a life of hypocrisy before he sold Bullfinch," replied Vixen, "but now I shall hate him frankly."

"But, Violet, don't you see that unless you can bring yourself to live pleasantly with that man your life will be made miserable? Fate condemns you to live under the same roof with him."

"I am not sure about that. I could go out as a governess. I am not at all clever, but I think I could teach enough for twenty pounds a year, or at least give my services in exchange for a comfortable home, as the advertisements say. How I wish I could read Greek and play Chopin, like Lady Mabel Ashbourne. I'll write to dear old McCroke, and ask her to get me a place."

"My dear Violet, how can you talk so absurdly. You, the future mistress of the Abbey House, to go meandering about the world teaching buttermen's or tea-dealers' children to spell B a, ba, and A b, ab?"

"It might be better than sitting at meat with a man I detest," said Vixen. "Am I to value the flesh-pots of Egypt more than my liberty and independence of spirit?"

"You have your mother to think of," urged Roderick. "You owe duty and obedience to her, even if she has offended you by this foolish marriage. If you have so bad an opinion of Captain Winstanley, you are all the more bound to stand by your mother."

"That is an argument worth listening to," said Vixen. "It might be cruel to leave poor mamma quite at his mercy. I don't suppose he would actually illtreat her. He knows his own interest too well for that. He will not lock her up in a cellar, or beat, or starve her. He will be content with making himself her master. She will have no more will of her own than if she were a prettily dressed doll placed at the head of the table for show. She will be lulled into a state of childish bliss, and go smiling through life, believing she has not a wish ungratified. Everybody will think her the happiest of women, and Captain Winstanley the best of husbands."

Vixen said all this with prophetic earnestness, looking straight forward into

the green glade before her, where the beech-nuts and acorns were dropping in a gentle rain of plenty.

"I hope things won't be quite so bad as you anticipate. I hope you will be able to make yourself happy, in spite of Captain Winstanley. And we shall see each other pretty often, I hope, Violet, as we used in old times. The Dovedales are at Wiesbaden; the duke only holds existence on the condition of deluging himself with German waters once a year; but they are to be back early in November. I shall make the duchess call on Mrs. Winstanley directly she returns."

"Thanks; mamma will be very pleased. I wonder you are not with them."

"Oh, I had to begin my duties as M. F. H. I wouldn't have been away for the world."

Violet looked at her watch. It was a good deal later than she had supposed. Time goes quickly when one is talking over a new grievance with an old friend. She was a long way from the Abbey House.

"I must go home," she said; "mamma and Captain Winstanley may arrive at any moment. There is no time named in mamma's last telegram," she said; "only that they are moving gently homeward."

"Let us go, then," said Rorie, rising from his rugged seat,

"But I am not going to take you out of your way. Every step of my way home takes you farther from Briarwood."

"Never mind if it does. I mean to walk home with you. I daresay, if I were very tired, Bates would lend me a mount home."

"You can have Arion, if you like."

"No, thanks. Arion shall not have my thirteen stone; I want a little more timber under me."

"You ought to have had Bullfinch," said Vixen regretfully.

"I would have had him, if I had known he was in the market. The writing a figure or so more or less in a cheque should not have hindered me."

BLUEBEARD AT BROGLIO.

THE ancient castle of Broglia is a landmark from the city of Siena. A bold castellated mass catches your eye, based on a rocky platform, midway up the wooded slopes of the Chianti hills. Behind rises the straight ridge of the Casentino mountains; behind both frown the rugged Apennines.

If the castle of Broglio is a landmark, the "fiero barone," its master, is also a landmark among his countrymen.

Like his castle, he is, as to age, of unknown antiquity. Moreover, he is the greatest man in Italy, much greater than the king. When he was prime-minister to Victor Emmanuel the baron forgot himself so far as on one occasion to have passed out before his sovereign. On an angry remonstrance being addressed to him, he replied, "That, after all, the house of Ricasoli dated back two centuries earlier than the house of Savoy." Victor Emmanuel was a good-natured man, and very courteous, but pride, such as the baron's, was too much even for him. The fiero barone being then, as I said, his minister, the king took an early opportunity of leaving the then capital, Florence, for Milan, without apprising him. The hint was taken. The baron's resignation was at once sent in, and accepted. The baron retired to Broglio; and Victor Emmanuel selected the facile Ratazzi to succeed him.

Altogether, on reflection, the baron considered it was an undue condescension on his part to serve the king. As a patriot, he was the servant of Italy; but Italy is a poetic abstraction, Victor Emmanuel a solid reality of flesh and blood.

Obedience in the one case he accepted in a general and impalpable sense. Attendance on the other was but an honourable name for servitude. The baron, who declined any title or honour because he was "the baron," with a name more ancient than the royal house of Savoy, thought that servitude of any kind was incompatible with his dignity.

He could lead the Liberal party from Broglio more fitly than from the Pitti at Florence, or the Quirinal at Rome. Let the Liberals, if they wanted him, come to his castle. The Liberals, knowing the temper of their chief, came in shoals. It was better so, and more befitting the name he bore.

When such a man as this invites you to his castle, you must go. We were in the dog-days. It had not rained for three months, it was dusty beyond words to describe, and we had a drive of ten miles before us. We were four in number. I do not know which dreaded the heat the most. Diplomacy, in the person of a most courteous ambassador, who would rather die than complain in the presence of ladies; a lady, whom I will call Madame Beauty;

another male, whom I will characterise as Parliament; and myself.

Once out of the sheltering walls of Siena, we might appropriate the words of Napoleon at Saarbrück, and say we received "a baptism of fire."

Madame Beauty, abhorring tan and freckles, broke out into loud lamentations. I seconded her. To protect us, the hood of the carriage, an open one, was raised. This relieved us ladies, but not so the gentlemen. They could neither sit up straight nor lean back.

Parliament, a debonair young person, taking life easily, hung his long thin legs outside the carriage, over the wheel, thus accepting his misfortunes sideways. Diplomacy, with the honour and good repute of his august sovereign ever before his eyes, accommodated himself on less elastic principles. He must have suffered agonies; there was no room for his legs; neither could he raise his head, nor stiffen his back.

The road to Broglio was as rugged as the temper of the baron; there was nothing level about either. No sooner were we on the top of one steep ascent than we dropped down hopelessly on the other side. The fierce August sun splashed and dashed on the vineyards and on the olives, like fire. Here and there a large villa, planted on a hill, presented itself, naked and forlorn, to a merciless sunshine. Other villas there were, backed by cypresses, pointing defiance to the brazen heavens.

We were not conversational; the heat made us dull.

Madame Beauty peeped out now and then.

"Splendid! charming! lovely!" were the words on her soft red lips.

Another peep.

"Magnificent! picturesque! poetic!"

"Heavens! what will she do by-and-by for her superlatives," thought I, "if she casts them about so prodigally thus early in the day?" It was only Madame Beauty's way. She was either in tears or she was bursting out into constant songs of praise. The varying expression of her sweet face, the inflections of her musical voice, reclaimed her words from sameness.

Then she fell into fresh ecstasies as we ascended into a forest region, where groups of oaks reared their ancient heads out of a wilderness of tall grass, and heath, and blossoming shrubs of cistus and lavender. In the breaks of timber appeared yellow crags with wooded margins, upland

fields, and vineyards. The crags dropped downwards towards a dried-up river-bed, where a few sheep, led by a ragged boy, snatched a hasty morsel.

Let Madame Beauty exclaim as she would, it was a downright ugly road. Once within the territory of Broglio (a fact announced by an outlook over boundless vineyards), the faultless neatness of the cultivation, the regularity of the furrows, the freedom from weeds, and the peculiar training of the vines, were not to be mistaken. Instead of the primitive Tuscan fashion of letting nature have her way in festooning the vines from tree to tree, or the Roman habit of netting the vines thickly to cane sticks, in a sort of mazy wilderness, each plant was isolated and dwarfed to about a yard in height. At most it was permitted to bear three or four bunches; these, hanging low on the stem to intensify the flavour, were magnificent in size and colour. From those vineyards comes the good Broglio wine, which has found its way, along with its master's name, all over the world.

Presently we were ascending the rounded summits of the Chianti hills, rising steeper and nearer, broken by wooded ravines and lawns of turf, scored by red rocks, and admirably adapted to grape culture.

"Charming! pastoral! enchanting!" Madame Beauty was off again in full cry. "Look! oh, look!" craning her neck out of the hood. "Simply marvellous! sublime!"

Madame Beauty had called wof so often that nobody looked up, till, in an ecstasy of appeal, she added: "The castle!"

There it was, sure enough, towering above us, a huge, solid, castellated pile—divided from us by a deep valley, also laid out in vineyards—with two central towers of unequal height in the midst. The sun was playing painfully on the long lines of Gothic windows, painfully also on the bright red walls. Why did the fiero barone, when he restored his castle, colour it red? The fresh stone jambs of the Gothic windows and their arches sounded a perpetual discord with the grey old central towers.

"A grand position, but ugly," I said.

Madame Beauty snapped me up sharply. "Some people are never contented," she said.

Diplomacy backed up the lady in admiration. Parliament knew the castle and "the strong man," its master, well; so he smoked his cigarette placidly, dangling

his legs over the wheel, and took no part in the discussion.

"It is the castle of Bluebeard," was all he said curtly, when admiration was exhausted.

"How? Why? What does he mean?" We all fell upon him.

He dangled his legs ostentatiously and shook his head. "I repeat, it is the castle of Bluebeard—voilà tout! You will judge for yourselves."

Even Madame Beauty, with her wheedling ways, could not extract any further information.

A turn in the road shut out the castle. Fresh life seemed infused into our horses; with streaming flanks they responded to the driver's whip, and galloped up a steep avenue bordered by ancient cypresses. The Chianti hills were literally over our heads; we seemed driving into them. Another avenue, this time of fir. Up, up, up; till we were under the castle walls.

We then dashed over the drawbridge, then under a portcullis.

Within the gates a board announced that the castle of Broglio was not shown to visitors while the restorations were proceeding. The restorations had been proceeding for the last twenty years, and would proceed as long as the baron lived.

We zigzagged up a narrow road, threading our way under ancient walls. Some were torn down and lay in ruins—and there were heaps of mortar and piles of stones. A damp cold chilled us, a gloomy darkness engulfed us. Where was the sun gone, and the heat, and the glare? Madame Beauty turned pale, and stared at Diplomacy with alarmed eyes. Parliament's words suddenly recurred to her.

"Why did you call this Bluebeard's castle?" she again asks. "Tell me before I go in. Is there anything strange in it? A ghost? Is it haunted?"

"Wait and see," replied Parliament, determined to baffle curiosity. We reached a quadrangle; the grey towers were rising over us, ready to crush us, and long lines of gloomy buildings extended on either hand. How stern and dismal. Nothing modern there. No red walls, nor flaunting sunlit windows. Even Madame Beauty was mute.

As we drew up before an arched doorway she shuddered, recovered herself a little, then smiled faintly up at a morose and defiant façade.

If the outside of the castle was grim, the major-domo who advanced to meet us was still grimmer. With sullen gravity he answered our enquiry, and announced the

astounding fact that the baron was out. We were expected at an earlier hour; the baron had given us up. Consternation fell upon us at this intelligence.

"There now!" broke out Parliament roughly. "If you accept an invitation from such a man as the lord of Broglio, you are bound to consider his convenience! Of course he had given us up; no one would be out of doors at this time of day but dogs and English!" This was a bad shot on Parliament's side, for only I of the whole party was English. Diplomacy looked grave. He politely demurred to what Parliament was saying. He opined that, as no hour was mentioned, it was the baron who was to blame. He opined also, that, as the ambassador of— he ought to be considered; not individually, but as representing his august master.

"The baron is greater than any king!" cried out Parliament, exasperated, standing on the steps before the door—we ladies had already left the carriage. "After all, when I brought you here, I told you we started too late. You managed it among you. I wash my hands of it."

Diplomacy, still seated in the carriage, felt himself in a false position, his face showed it—snubbed, in fact, by Parliament and by the baron. Parliament was but a wilful young deputy of the left; but the baron, that was different. Ought he to descend, or ought he to return to Siena? He gazed uneasily into the cool depths of the darkened hall; he cast a doubtful glance at such portions of the sky as were visible from between the walls; he looked at the streaming flanks of the panting horses. No! He must pocket his official dignity and remain, if only to rest the horses. Parliament must explain to the baron that as the ambassador of—he was not accustomed to such treatment. Reconciled by this mental protest, he left the carriage, and we entered the hall?

All was strangely modern; nothing ancient, nothing imposing. Cheerful white walls, shining with fresh paint and frescoed—a great opportunity lost! The hall—nothing but a broad passage—led to a southern gallery, conspicuous by a gaudily-tinted ottoman placed in the centre, called by Italians *amorino*—little love—with *dos-à-dos* seats for four; each couple close enough to look well into each other's eyes. The *amorino* ottoman stood opposite an open door, through which a flight of steps led to the ramparts, metamorphosed into

a shrubbery, with flower parterres, at that moment blazing in the sunshine. From thence we were led, Parliament in front, striding on with his long thin legs, into a saloon with darkened windows, where stuccoed columns supported a rafted ceiling, and cinque cento carving was concealed by a glaring cretonne.

The walls followed suit. Rows of trim-perry little prints, in wooden frames, were side-by-side with priceless works of the Sienese and Umbrian schools. It was clear the baron had no taste. In the place of honour, opposite the range of gothic windows, were hung two flaring productions representing the visit of Victor Emmanuel to the castle; the tall gaunt figure of the baron—"So like Don Quixote," Madame Beauty said—contrasting strongly with the broad-shouldered, burly monarch.

I ventured to observe that there must be something very discrepant about the baron, to have created such an interior. For a wonder, no one differed from me. Madame Beauty, not at all herself—she said she felt oppressed by the air of Broglio—had collapsed on one of the chintz sofas. She kept repeating that she could not breathe. Diplomacy, much out of joint in consequence of the slight put upon him by the baron's absence, was evidently turning over in his mind how he should report this unbecoming reception in his next despatch.

"You are looking at the pictures," Parliament said to me in his odd, curt way; "the baron has a mania for having everything painted. Better not when you live in Bluebeard's castle!"

"What do you mean, with your Bluebeard's castle?" cried Madame Beauty, quite provoked, rising and running up to him.

"Wait and see," gravely answered Parliament, gently disengaging himself from her grasp.

At that point one consciousness alone possessed me—it was hunger. I distinctly felt its pangs. If Bluebeard would give me food, I would consider his misdeeds afterwards. I addressed myself to Parliament for relief.

"When the baron went out, had he ordered luncheon? Can you enquire?"

At this query both Diplomacy and Parliament fell upon me savagely. One would think I had proposed the committing a crime.

"A cup of coffee, perhaps, and a bit of

bread," put in dear kind Beauty. "If she is faint——"

"I cannot touch coffee," was my rejoinder. "But a crust of bread—surely a crust of bread——"

Both the gentlemen were indignant. If the baron had ordered nothing, nothing could be asked for. On reflection, both had agreed that we must await his return. Diplomacy had with difficulty been persuaded that the hour of our arrival was inopportune.

"But," said I, pleading hard, "are you not both hungry too?"

All shook their heads.

"If I do not eat," I added, prompted by desperation, "I shall faint. What will you do with me then? I shall require to be laid upon the baron's best bed. Think of that!"

Diplomacy, being a kind man, smiled and yielded. Arm in arm with Parliament, he went out to see what could be done.

Madame Beauty, meanwhile, with a languid indifference to all sublunary wants, posed herself in a coquettish attitude. She was sure to be taken care of, by miracle, or chance, or both; a pretty woman always is taken care of.

To beguile the time, I wandered into a suite of rooms opening from the saloon. At all events, in the baron's absence we could wander about as we liked. The doors were all open. I observed that the entire range of Gothic windows all looked out due south towards the thickly-planted ramparts. I came upon a state bed-room, full of mirrors, with dressing-room beyond, then various other rooms, all perfectly commonplace. Beyond, I reached an anteroom. Beyond that, again, an open door, and—darkness! I groped my way in. Was it a chapel? There were windows, but of painted glass.

At first, I could distinguish nothing. Little by little, I made out a lofty carved ceiling, and dark panelled walls. Growing accustomed to the subdued light, I discovered that one entire side of the wall was covered by a picture. I drew near to see what it was. Heavens! what a picture!

In the centre, on a white bed, lay the form of a dying woman; her features drawn and ghastly. She was still young, though hollow-eyed and emaciated. With one upraised arm and outstretched hand she clutched the arm of a bride, arrayed in orange-wreath veil and white draperies. The bride stooped over her as she lay, too weak, it seemed, to raise herself upright.

Her other arm rested on the hand of a young man standing beside the bride—the bridegroom, who stood a little back. One felt how the dying woman was clinging to the bride—clinging to her with the grasp of death. Her half-open mouth told a ghastly tale of struggling breath; yet the shadow of a smile parted her white lips. "You are saved!" she seemed to say. "I die happy!"

Apart, in the shading of the background, stood two other figures. Foremost, the spare iron-knit form of the baron (I had seen him in public, and recognised him at once), perfectly upright, and rigidly impassive; his blue dress-coat was buttoned over his chest; his hard deep-set eyes were fixed on the dying woman. One long bony finger was raised to his lips; the remaining fingers, turned down, supported his chin. His face neither expressed pity nor anger, nor passion of any kind. He was simply musing. Behind the baron stood a priest. On the farther side a doctor and a nurse balanced the composition. The eyes of all were turned towards the bed; they were awaiting that lady's last breath.

"I told you this was Bluebeard's castle," spoke the voice of Parliament out of the gloom. "You have found it out for yourselves. That dying woman is the baron's wife. There is no key with blood upon it, and there was no sister Anne to call out from the tower for help, and no brother to rescue anyone, but this is Bluebeard's castle all the same. The fiero barone shut up his wife. I don't mean——" and Parliament made a vivid pantomime of drawing an imaginary knife across an imaginary throat. "No; he is too grand seigneur for that; but after years of imprisonment at Broglia she died. She bore him many children. They all died one after the other; and were buried in the chapel in the courtyard, where she lies also. He is a great man, but he has a good deal to answer for—the fiero barone! The children were all delicate like their mother; she was one of the loveliest women of her day thirty years ago. I have heard my father describe her appearance at the grand dual balls at the Pitti at Florence. The company gathered in crowds to admire her dancing in the cotillion. A great beauty, too soft and yielding for her happiness, but most bewitching! The fiero barone, who is a rich man, and would not condescend to think of money, took her without a portion; he was wildly in love with her. She thought she could do anything she liked with him; and so she did, poor lady, for a

time. The baron is a man of unblemished honour," added Parliament hastily, seeing the expression of our faces.

"But what does his honour matter if he is a——"

"Hush! Remember that you are under his roof." This rebuke was addressed to me. "He had his reasons," continued Parliament curtly.

"What might they be?" I asked sardonically. "Of course the baron does not hang up this picture here, and then ask people to the house, without intending both himself and his reasons—as you call them—to be discussed."

"Just so," responded Parliament; "that is why I tell you all about it."

"I suppose," said I, "he had some motive in having that picture painted? Was it remorse, or was it as a penance?"

"I cannot say," Parliament replied. "No one understands his motive. If he had not been out you might not have seen the picture."

"But you appear to have seen it?"

"Yes; he brought me into the room himself."

"Did he make any remark?"

"None," replied Parliament.

"Tell us, I entreat you, more about the lady and the children," interrupted Madame Beauty, her fine brown eyes full of tears.

"Oh, as to the children," returned Parliament, "that is soon told. As I said, they were born delicate, and they all died. The only one that survived out of the five—there were five, I think—was the daughter, the bride in the picture, Anastasia. She lived with her mother in the rooms which were her prison."

"He must be mad!" I cried.

"You would hardly say that in the senate," answered Parliament, highly indignant. "A more clear and masterly intelligence—a more eloquent and far-seeing statesman does not exist. Then his probity! He is a modern Aristides."

"What could be his motive, then, if he were not mad?"

"Oh, a great deal of motive, according to his view," replied Parliament, shrugging his shoulders with prodigious insouciance. "The lady made him jealous! There was a certain marquis in waiting on the Grand Duchess of Tuscany, a very handsome man. The poor lady was young and thoughtless; she danced, and she laughed, and she flirted with this marquis. There were letters—my father saw them—it was a dissipated court. She was a Venetian,

brought up among serenades and gondolas; very loving, too. You can still see it in that wasted face before you in the picture; soft and smooth, with beautiful fair hair, as you see, spread out on the pillow. My father knew her well; the marquis was his intimate friend. For some time the baron said nothing. Bluebeard always holds his tongue, you know, in the story. At last the end came.

"There was a great masked ball given at the Pitti Palace. The lady appeared as Poetry, her fair hair bound with a coronet of emeralds with diamond leaves, the gift of the baron—when he married her he gave her splendid jewels; her dress was purple, spangled with gold stars. All eyes were upon her; the marquis danced with her incessantly. When the ball broke up the marquis led her to the baron, who received her with a bow, smiled upon her, and, with his usual punctilious politeness, offered her his arm to conduct her to her carriage.

"They drove off together. The night was dark, the lady was tired; perhaps she slept, who knows? They drove on and on, until she roused herself, and asked what new road they were taking which was so long?"

"It is all right," the baron answered. "I have given my orders. As it is a cold night, and we have a long way to go, I have brought this wrap for you. You will need it."

"As he spoke, he took from the front seat a mantle of fur and placed it on her shoulders. The poor lady dared not ask him what he meant. They drove on and on into the night, far away from Florence, over the Campagna, and along the road that leads towards the mountains; the baron silent, the lady speechless, trembling under her fur mantle.

"What the baron said when he did speak, or how he said it, no one knows; but, at all events, he made her understand that he was taking her then and there to his castle of Broglio, which she would never leave alive—or dead, indeed; for if she died, she would be buried in the chapel. Now Broglio is more than forty miles from Florence. It was a long drive."

Madame Beauty clasped her hands; I made use of some strong expressions. Who would have thought of finding Dante's Nello della Pietra and Pia de' Tolomei in the nineteenth century?

"You will see the baron shortly," continued Parliament, quite unmoved. "You

can then judge for yourselves if he is a man to be trifled with."

"Was she really guilty?" I asked.

"My father, who saw the letters, considered them, I believe, rather compromising in a husband's point of view," was the answer; "but when his wife was once shut up in his castle of Broglio, the baron never alluded to her. He ignored everything. Even when he met the handsome marquis at court—which he did constantly, as he was prime minister to the grand duke before Italy was a united kingdom, and the marquis, a great favourite, was in waiting on the grand duchess—in his cold rigid way the baron singled him out for particular attention. The baron was too proud to admit to the world that any man had dishonoured him.

"The poor lady, his wife, was made to expiate her own sins and those of the marquis. She was shut up until she died; she saw her children all die, except this daughter Anastasia.

"The poor soul grew very pious in her imprisonment. She was permitted to attend mass in the chapel, where her children lay unburied in their little coffins, and where she herself now lies also unburied. That is another fancy of the fiero barone. Neither his wife nor his children are buried. We will go and see the chapel and the vault," continued Parliament, turning round to Diplomacy. "It is a strange fancy not to bury them; stranger still to display their coffins to the curiosity of visitors."

Diplomacy acquiesced. He had listened with a polite expression of horror on his well-regulated features, but carefully avoided expressing any opinion. Whatever he had done, the baron had been prime minister at the court to which he was himself accredited.

"Is that all?" asked Madame Beauty.

"Oh, of course all sorts of strange stories are told. They talk of the curate of Passaglia. Passaglia is a parish just over Broglio, higher up on the Chianti hills. The curate had been a kind of secretary to the baron." Parliament was speaking, spurred on to his recital by the eagerness of two pairs of women's eyes riveted upon him. "He was permitted to come once a month to Broglio to confess the lady. He was a good man, the curate, and did all he could to soften her imprisonment. Indeed, he affirmed that she was a living saint, and that her soul being purified from all earthly taint by her suf-

ferings and the patience with which she bore them, she would need no fires of purgatory when she died, but go straight to Paradise. Perhaps this reached the baron and displeased him, *chi lo sa?*

"One day the baron was away when the priest came as usual to confess her. Finding the lady very sad (she died soon after), he remained longer than he ought to have done, conversing with her. She had already confided to him her intense desire that her sole remaining child, now grown up, should marry her cousin, a Ricasoli—a nephew of the baron. While she lived, the lady said, she could watch over Anastasia and defend her a little, but once she was dead—and she felt that her end was near—who could say what the baron might do? Before the curate went she implored him on her knees to intercede with the baron to let their child marry her cousin before she died.

"How she pleaded no one knows, nor who heard her. Perhaps the curate listened too long; perhaps he dropped some imprudent words; *chi lo sa?* There are secret stairs in this old castle; double walls and concealed doors everywhere. Anyhow, when the priest went out he met the fiero barone waiting for him in the courtyard. The baron smiled upon the curate as he had smiled upon the marquis, bid him good day, and asked him to stay to dinner. But something whispered to the curate that there was trouble in the air, and that he had better get away from Broglio as soon as he could. Instead, however, of letting him go, the baron walked him round and round the ramparts, asking his opinion on various subjects. Just as they were parting, the baron took out his snuff-box and offered the curate a pinch, smiling as he did so. The priest accepted the pinch of snuff, and took his leave. When he reached his own door, the curate fell down on the threshold, and was taken up for dead by his aunt, who kept house for him."

"Oh, why did you bring me here?" cried Madame Beauty hysterically. "Must I see this dreadful man, and speak to him?"

She was leaning over the back of a chair, her eyes riveted upon the picture.

"Come out of this dreadful room," I said to her, "or this picture will haunt you."

"Is not the air oppressive?" she asked with a deep sigh, advancing towards the door. "The moment I entered this house I felt as if I could not breathe."

We were now in the saloon. Instead of

bending over Beauty, who was lying back on a sofa near a window, very pale, Diplomacy took Parliament's arm, and left us ladies to ourselves. Madame Beauty was now sobbing. I implored her to calm herself. What should we do if the baron appeared? How account for her agitation?

A footstep approached. Fortunately it was only the major-domo, who came to announce that the déjeuner was served. He looked at us curiously, then glanced at the open door beyond. Did he guess that we had penetrated to Bluebeard's chamber? I felt that I looked guilty.

The banqueting-hall at Broglio was spacious and lofty, with large Gothic windows opening to the ramparts. But even there the baron was not happy in his style of decoration. Rows of plaster knights in tin armour, brightly painted, lined the wall, placed on sham stucco pedestals. The cornice, the roofs, and the panels were equally crude in colour.

At a small table in one corner we found Diplomacy and Parliament already seated. The déjeuner was decidedly parsimonious. But the Broglio wine! Diplomacy quite forgot himself in his expressions about the wine. There was but one bottle!

It appeared that Diplomacy, who had borne the horrors of Bluebeard's chamber unmoved, had during his absence with his young friend explored the famous wine cellars—the subterranean dungeons, in fact, of the ancient castle. There they had beheld, piled up against the red stone walls, four hundred thousand bottles of Broglio wine, the dates of each vintage marked, as well as the quality. A museum of minerals could not be kept with greater nicety. Being men, their mouths had watered at the sight of the good liquor, with which they naturally expected to be regaled. And then—one bottle! Diplomacy felt, over and above his own particular wrong, the disrespect shown in his person to his august master. Was he, the representative of the king of —, to share a bottle of wine with four persons!

It was wonderful with what judgment the major-domo doled out that single bottle of wine. Diplomacy snuffed and sniffed and tossed his head every time it was presented to him.

When we were left alone, Diplomacy related that, before visiting the cellar, he and Parliament had been conducted into the chapel, where, in an open vault behind the altar, they had seen the coffin of

the poor lady in the picture lying on tressels, without any pall or covering upon it whatever. The four smaller coffins, in which lay her children, ranged round her own, were in the same condition.

"After that," Diplomacy went on to say, "the guide who volunteered to show us the castle conducted us up a narrow stair in a tower forming a separate part of the castle. Truly," said Diplomacy, "a dreary range of apartments. The small Gothic windows, in walls of great thickness, are turned to the north, and look upon a grove of cypresses. No ray of sunshine can ever penetrate to these chambers. The ceilings are low, and crossed with heavy wooden rafters. There are large open grates, with seats in the chimney corners. One room is hung with embossed leather, faded and torn in many places; another painted in fresco, much injured by the damp. The doors are low, and there appear to be many recesses, leading, perhaps, to secret stairs and outlets. I tried the door of what seemed to be a closet, but was desired to desist. Of these gloomy apartments, opening one into the other, there are six, of various sizes. The largest is the last, forming a kind of angle. There there is a low bedstead, much decayed and worm-eaten. Otherwise all these rooms are unfurnished; therefore not adapted, as was stated to us, for the accommodation of the baron during the summer months.

"But," continued Diplomacy, with increasing gravity—his utterances always are grave and studied, as if he were conscious of a secretary taking notes to transmit to the parliament of his country—"I must confess I did not believe this statement. Not only were there no signs of habitation, but the plaster had fallen from the walls in many places, and the air was confined and damp, as of rooms never opened. I imagine they must have served as a——"

"Prison!" exclaimed Madame Beauty, taking the word out of his mouth in her impetuous way. "Why, my dear minister, those are the rooms in which the poor lady was imprisoned. Can you doubt it? And that is the bed in which she died—the bed in the picture. Oh, what would I give," she cried, clasping her hands, "to go away before the baron returns."

"Impossible, madame!" returned Diplomacy, bridling. "Impracticable! The baron's absence has been explained to me. There was a mistake."

Parliament echoed his friend's words. Parliament would answer for it, all these tales would vanish from our minds when the baron made his appearance.

Madame Beauty burst into tears.

Here was a dilemma. It is amazing, however, how dilemmas disentangle themselves, if one only has patience to wait, and not force the sequence of events.

Whilst we were debating whether we should wait to see the baron or depart, the sharp clink of a horse's hoofs echoed up through the open window, as of a rider hastening rapidly onwards.

"The baron!" cried the major-domo, rushing in. "He will be at the door in a few moments. Will the excellencies move into the saloon? The baron always receives in the saloon."

He entered the room—a tall, spare, dried-up man, with a small intellectual head, and a high forehead, on which lay straight brown hair; sharp aquiline features cut in a mould as hard as granite; eyes intense, yet veiled under thick overhanging eyebrows; the eyes generally half-closed, and resting on the ground, but, when they did open, flashing into a flame.

Although the heat was overpowering, and he had only just returned, the baron was as cool as if he had emerged from an ice-house. Not a speck of dust lay on his well-fitting coat; there was not a turn of the head, not a motion, but what was calm, dignified, and imposing.

Spite of the picture and our hostile intentions, the man himself dominated us. Advancing to where we stood in the centre of the saloon, with the air of a man habituated to receptions, the fiero barone shook hands with Parliament, and addressed to him some lofty excuses as to the misunderstanding which had retarded him; then he requested to be presented to each of us by name, offering us bony fingers absolutely freezing.

And here I must pause to note, that, either from absence of mind on the part of the baron, or want of distinctness in Parliament's introduction, neither then, nor at any moment during our stay, would he be prevailed on to comprehend our personality. All along the baron addressed me as the wife of Parliament—to the intense disgust of that very young man—and Madame Beauty as the wife of Diplomacy—an assumption that seemed to sow seeds of discord between them. It was simply useless to attempt explanation. The fiero

barone looked over our heads, so to say, and paid no heed.

Behold us seated in a circle round our awful host! Madame Beauty was elegantly disposed on a sofa, evidently impressed with the baron's appearance, but as under protest. Diplomacy, his mind at ease with regard to any irregularity in the manner of our reception, yielded himself up a willing victim to the courtesies of the baron; but, somehow or other, the baron failed to accept Diplomacy at his own price, and treated the illustrious representative of "his majesty" like any other common mortal. With his half-shut eyes, he discoursed about his castle and his vineyards; spoke of the years he had spent in bringing the latter into proper cultivation; how he had imported vine-growers from Touraine at great expense to instruct his Italian peasants; and how hard it had been to eradicate their prejudices. At last he had succeeded; the Broglie wine could pass the sea; there were agents in London and Paris.

A question as to who these agents were brought a haughty look on his face. He, personally, knew nothing about it; it gratified him to succeed, as he held that every possessor of land was bound to increase the value of his estate.

He expressed himself with remarkable purity of language, and with the authority of a man accustomed to carry weight in every syllable he utters. His phrases were clear and well turned; his words well chosen. His legislative manner lent absolute dignity to subsoil and manure. The powerful intellect of the man shone out even in such matters; one felt it was only an accident that he had chosen such a subject, and that he would deliver himself with the same masterly lucidity and exhaustive knowledge on any other.

He was intensely formal, but evidently intended to be gracious; much in the same manner as a well-fed tiger might permit a visitor to enter his cage, and to contemplate him under certain conditions.

While the gentlemen talked, I studied him. A great statesman was before me; a man whose name, as great as those of Cavour and Garibaldi, would go down to extreme ages. Within him was passion of dominion that would crush into chaff all that opposed it. Alas, poor lady! Why, in the lightness of her youth and splendour of her beauty, did she trifle with such a man?

After awhile, the sun having declined,

the baron led us upon the ramparts. As his tall erect figure passed along, the baron discoursed learnedly on the archæology of Broglio, speaking in long sustained sentences, as if he were pronouncing an oration. Once he was good enough to address his conversation especially to me, disregarding the claims of Madame Beauty to his attentions, she following languidly at a distance leaning on Diplomacy's arm.

Stopping short, and standing quite still, he raised those veiled eyes of his, and, after contemplating me for a moment, asked me how I should like to live at Broglio? At first I could not find breath to reply. Then I answered that, with books, I could live anywhere.

"You have seen my library?" he asked quickly.

"Yes," I replied.

"Plenty of books," he said. "They want arranging; would you do it for me?"

Before I could answer he turned away with a low laugh, and leant over the ramparts talking politics with Parliament.

Walking among the cypress-groves that shrouded that fatal northern wing where the poor lady had died, he suddenly turned, and, this time addressing the whole party, invited us to stay to dinner. By an extraordinary unanimity of feeling—not even a look had passed between us—we all said "No," in various words, but it was "No" substantially.

Soon after we took our leave. The fiero barone followed us to the door. Before him was the arched doorway leading into the chapel where the poor lady lay in her unburied coffin, her children gathered round her. A little farther on was the open stair in the tower, leading to the rooms which for so many years had been her prison. Above the sun-motes strike upon the grim walls.

Thus we left him standing, bareheaded and unmoved, between the present and the past. A moment, and a turn in the steep descent concealed him from our gaze.

Then Madame Beauty spoke, but what she said appeareth not in this chronicle.

A MEDICAL MYSTERY.

A STORY.

I HAD gone to see an old friend who is now a famous physician in a great city. Years had passed away since we had last met and parted. He then held a variety of official appointments, which looked

rather imposing when put down on paper, but which meant a great expenditure of time and costly medicine at a remuneration that was exceedingly unremunerative. But all good things come to the man who works and waits. I had been delighted to hear of my old friend's success; and when I availed myself of his standing invitation to "bestow myself" upon him for a short time, I was equally delighted to find that prosperity had not in the slightest degree harmed him. It had acted like a kindly sun and soft breezes in eliciting the best flowers and fruits of character.

One night I sat late with him after dinner, discussing the wine and walnuts; the ladies had gone to an evening party, for which, after a busy day, we hardly felt up to the mark. We talked of old friends and times, and of professional chances. I happened to say to him:

"You doctors see an immense amount of character and incident. The medical is certainly a very lively and dramatic profession. I suppose few men know more family secrets than the doctors; more than the lawyers, more than the parsons."

"Yes. Patients often go into the confessional, but we never tell the secrets of the confessional."

"But tell me this. Have you seen much of what is called the romance of crime, or crime without any romance at all; the odd cases which get into the courts, and which the novelists work up for their stories?"

"I am afraid that you have been cultivating a taste for sensational fiction. I am sure I shall not be able to amuse you in that way."

"You have seen nothing of the sort?"

"Nothing. Such cases of course occur from time to time, but they are so lost in the mass of medical practice, that few men, unless they are specialists, by which I mean chiefly the toxicologists, see anything of them. There are doctors who can tell you any amount of tales about poisons, but my own line has always been prosaic, paying, and practical."

"Well," I answered, "there is a theory that every man meets with something remarkable in his time if he can only detect the element of the marvellous."

"No doubt you are right," said my friend; and then, as he smoked the meditative cigar, he exclaimed, after a pause: "You remind me of some odd

circumstances. Yes, there really was something very mysterious which happened to me once, and I have never been able to detect the secret of it. I should be glad to get your opinion of it. This is the story:

"I was called out one night after dinner to attend a lady, who, I was informed, was suffering from sudden and severe illness. Sensible people, when they send to a doctor, are careful to explain the exact symptoms of a case. The doctor then comes prepared. He is often able to bring the precise remedies with him. He saves time, and this is often the same thing as saving life. All that the messenger, a boorish-looking man in a kind of livery, could tell me was 'summat in the stomach.' Most illnesses might, more or less, be referred to something of the kind, and practically the fellow proved more correct than I had supposed.

"It was after dinner, at the end of a hard day's work. I had been in consultation for hours and driving about for hours. I had got my feet into slippers; there was the easy-chair, the evening paper, and a decanter of old port, which had been given me by a grateful and gouty patient. Still, the case was urgent; it might possibly be lucrative; and a true-hearted doctor, above all things, never allows an appeal in case of suffering to be made to him in vain. I did not think it necessary to send for my carriage, but stepped out into the streets. The wind was roaring in great gusts, keeping back the rain, which threatened to fall heavily after a time.

"We went to a big house in a big square. I had noticed the house before, and not incuriously; walls and windows had always seemed so blank. I had never observed any signs of life in the house. Once I had asked who lived there, and I was told, "Oh, that's old Miss Brinckman's house." The interlocutor had evidently thought that I knew all about old Miss Brinckman, but this was by no means the case. I had afterwards found out that she was old, infirm, without near friends and relatives, and somewhat peculiar and eccentric in her ways.

"My old notions about the house were strengthened as I walked upstairs. As I passed from floor to floor, by room after room, there was no sign or sound of habitation. The furniture was handsome, and heavy; the feet fell noiselessly on the thick carpets. Not in the best bedroom, but in quite the second-best bedroom, lay

Miss Brinckman, the mistress of the house. Her features were pinched with suffering, and she was in a state of great restlessness and anxiety. As the man truly said, there was "summat in the matter with the stomach." She was very ill; but the symptoms did not present anything especially abnormal. Few medical cases are exactly alike; a fact which perhaps explained one or two slight variations from the usual symptoms of a derangement of this kind. I thought the course of treatment abundantly indicated by the symptoms, and sat down and wrote a customary prescription, which, in the ordinary course, would undoubtedly be followed by beneficial effects. I observed that the bedroom was somewhat dingy and penurious, and out of character with the rest of the house. The nurse, however, told me that this was the invalid's favourite room, and that she preferred it to any other apartment. There was, of course, no arguing about tastes, and I was glad to get back home.

"I generally go out to make my calls as soon as I have finished with my morning receptions—about noon. I felt so perfectly secure about Miss Brinckman's case, that I called upon her nearly last of all. In the ordinary condition of things she ought to have been much better, and fairly getting on towards convalescence. This, however, was by no means the case. The patient was restless, feverish, complained of sickness, pain, and great thirst. The symptoms were perfectly consistent with the supposed complaint; but, on the other hand, they were also consistent with arsenical poisoning. It was of no use, however, to think of unnatural causes when natural causes might suffice. I did not know the patient's constitution, and an alteration in my prescription might produce the desired alteration in results.

"I sat down at a little table and prepared to write. As I did so, I cast up my eyes in meditative fashion and encountered those of the nurse. As soon as they met my gaze they were lowered towards the ground. Before this happened, however, I had caught their expression, which produced an extremely disagreeable impression. It seemed to me that there was a kind of silent laugh in them—a look of pride and contempt. We doctors are occasionally obliged to put up with a little impertinence from grand professional nurses, though even this does not very often happen. Nothing, however, had

occurred in our brief interviews which could account for the circumstance, and I had soon entirely forgotten it.

"I once more took my rounds next day, and made this one of my first calls. I had hoped to have found things much better. On the contrary, they were worse. The illness, whatever it was, was making progress, and the patient was decidedly worse. I really could not understand this untoward condition of things, entirely contrary as it was to my experience and expectations. I had some thoughts of calling in another opinion, but this is a step which I did not quite like. It seemed too much of a confession of weakness. On this occasion I prescribed remedies of an 'heroic kind,' which would deal thoroughly with the case, and took my leave, contented to wait and see what a day might bring forth.

"But as I sat at dinner with my family, my thoughts irresistibly wandered away to the case of Miss Brinckman. There was an unaccountable restlessness and anxiety in my mind. Usually I do not carry the cares of my profession into my family; I am satisfied with knowing that I have done my best, and after that there's no use fretting oneself; but I found that night I couldn't rest in peace. The case puzzled and alarmed me. After one or two vain attempts to settle down, I took up my hat, and started for the big house in the square towards ten o'clock at night.

"It was a good thing that I did so; otherwise, Miss Brinckman would have breathed her last that night. The symptoms had increased with great severity. Her face was positively blue; she was evidently in a state of collapse. I wondered whether it would be possible to revive her. Now I will let you in for a bit of my practice. The most powerful restorative I know is a mixture of champagne and brandy. It is not a pleasant combination—two good things spoilt, in fact—but I have known it do good when everything else has failed. My patient sensibly revived under its influence. Glancing at the mantelpiece, my eye alighted on the bottle of medicine containing my prescription; and as the bottle was nearly full, I saw at once that the proper doses had not been administered. Somehow I felt that the nurse's eye followed mine as it wandered towards the mantelpiece. She hastily arose and moved towards the spot, with an intention, obvious to my mind, of hiding or removing the medicine-bottle.

"Nurse," I said, somewhat peremptorily, "what is your name?"

"Quillimaine."

"Married or unmarried?"

"I am not married."

"Tell me immediately why my medicine has not been properly administered."

"Miss Brinckman could not take the medicine, sir. She was sick if she tried; and then she would not allow us to give her any."

"I did not think the answer was a true one, but then there was no use in interrogating poor half-dying Miss Brinckman."

"It was your duty under such circumstances to have sent for me at once."

"The woman was silent. A sudden thought flashed across my mind."

"Now look here, Nurse Quillimaine," I said. "Mark my words. If Miss Brinckman is not better to-morrow morning, I shall immediately send for a detective."

"The next morning Miss Brinckman was marvellously better."

"Did she recover eventually?"

"She got quite well, and is still living in the big house in the square. She is much better tempered, and more rational altogether. She is perfectly convinced that I saved her life, which is true enough, and I have to visit her two or three times a week."

"Did you ever talk to her about the nurse's conduct?"

"No; I did not think that it would be of any use. But I told her that I was not at all satisfied with the nurse, and hoped that she would never employ her again. On my asking how she came to engage such a person, she said that she came to her highly recommended by a relative. Pushing my enquiries respecting this relative, the old lady became reserved, and looked annoyed; and so I have never gone farther into matters, and have hardly any idea who she is or who her people may be. Of course I could not resist the idea that there might be someone who might profit by her death, but I have never been able to ascertain any facts."

"It is a very queer story."

"Certainly it is a very queer story, but I have something still queerer to tell. You know that to a great extent I am a season doctor, that I am one of the very few lucky doctors who, if they like, can take a few months' holiday when our town is 'out of season.' Now and then I used to take the practice of some friend less fortunate than myself in this respect. In

this way it happened that, about a twelve-month after Miss Brinckman's case, I found myself undertaking another man's practice two hundred miles away in the country. My friend had had some prosperous years, and was taking his wife and girls to the Rhine and Switzerland for a change; and none knew better than himself how necessary is a change to the hardly-wrought general practitioner.

"I was called in, one hot summer day, to see a venerable gentleman who had been partaking with the utmost freedom of the luxurious fruit of his garden, to which he attributed various disagreeable symptoms. I ventured to hint to the revered gentleman that a little moderation would not be unfitting his years and his symptoms. I strolled with him through his shady walks, and assuring him that strawberries were very bad for his complaint, partook liberally of them myself. I thought that a very simple prescription would make him all right at once, and I was a little surprised to be awoke up at two o'clock one morning and be told that he was dangerously ill. Now, if there is one thing to which I object more than another, it is to being called out at two o'clock in the morning. In my time I have been doctor to a local club, and I have been called out at that unearthly hour, across the snow on a winter's night, and have found the patient cheerfully partaking of pipe and grog on my arrival. This old gentleman, however, was very seriously ill. He was worse than I should have thought possible under the circumstances; indeed, he was in positive danger. I told him that he required a nurse. He answered that there was a woman, who had entered his service lately as a house-keeper, who was acting for him in that capacity, I did not see her that morning, but concluded that her duties as a house-keeper were then detaining her from her avocations as a nurse. I administered some brandy at once, as the symptoms seemed to require it, and going home, I myself dispensed the necessary drugs with the greatest care. The boy in buttons took out the medicine, and I had no reason to doubt that they were properly given to the patient.

"But on visiting the patient next day I found that he was worse; if he had taken them, they had done him no good. The symptoms were no longer any that could have arisen from mere errors in diet. They strongly resembled those of arsenical

poisoning. In fact, I felt myself suddenly and irresistibly reminded of Miss Brinckman's case. The course of events had run quite parallel so far.

"I asked to see the nurse, who on this occasion also was out of the way, but after some search came forward. If I had not thought of Miss Brinckman before I should have done so now, for I really thought at the moment that Quillimaine, the nurse, stood before me. A closer examination showed me, however, that I was mistaken. With great points of likeness, there was also manifest unlikeness. At the moment I still felt quite certain that there was some relationship between them. A sudden thought occurred to me, and I said:

"'I think you are a relation of Mrs. Quillimaine, the nurse, who was lately at Netherton?'

"She seemed annoyed and surprised by the question, and delayed her answer for a few moments, and then she said:

"'Yes, sir; Nurse Quillimaine is my sister.'

"'I thought I saw a likeness between you. What is your name? Is it Quillimaine also?'

"'My name is Sarah Mount, sir.'

"'Now, Sarah Mount, I want to speak with you privately before I leave the house.'

"She followed me into the little parlour, positively pale and trembling. I felt convinced that I was on the right track in suspecting her, and yet in the absence of any definite reason for suspicion, it was not at all clear how I could act for the best.

"I resolved that I would adopt exactly the same line of conduct as I had done in Miss Brinckman's case.

"'Sarah Mount,' I said, 'my patient has not improved as I hoped to find him improved. I have a strong idea that this is quite as much a case for the police as for the doctor.'

"She was terror-stricken.

"'I shall bring a policeman with me to-morrow morning, and shall most probably think it my duty to give you in charge.'

"I watched the effect of my words narrowly. Of course an honest woman would have resented them bitterly, and have demanded that I should explain fully this extraordinary language. But no attempt of the sort was made. She covered before me as I was speaking.

"I added mercilessly:

"And when I find my patient better, I shall expect that you will give a week's notice, and go away. You are not to go away before a week, that I may see how Mr. Wilson progresses; and you are not to stay a single moment longer than the week unless I give you permission. Do you hear, woman?" I exclaimed angrily, raising my voice and stamping my foot.

"I will do exactly as you say, sir," she said humbly.

"Then I arose to go. First of all I went upstairs, and saw that my patient took his medicines under my own eye. Part of them had been disposed of; but I felt no confidence that they had been duly administered. I made a careful examination of everything in the bedroom, and, indeed, as far as I could, all about the place; but, I am bound to say, without finding any corroboration of my malign suspicion.

"I went to Mr. Wilson's house next morning, and found him very much shaken indeed, but considerably better. He continued to improve, and in about a week he was quite well.

"At the end of the week the nurse or the housekeeper, whichever she chose to call herself, went away quietly.

"The career of a medical man is not uneventful; but I have always looked upon this as the most singular combination of circumstances that has ever happened to me."

"And have you no explanation to give?"

"None whatever. The facts are facts, which I cannot explain, and beyond which I am unable to go. I call it simply a Medical Mystery—an unsolved, perhaps an insoluble problem."

"But I suppose you have an hypothesis, a guess of some sort, to account for the circumstances."

"Well, to say the truth, I have; but the hypothesis is so strange and far-fetched that I hardly like to mention it."

"But let me hear it all the same."

"I have had occasion to notice several times that there are some sorts of medical secrets preserved in families. Probably it may be a simple, useful, innocent concoction, the secret of which may not be known to the local medical man, although he may hazard a shrewd guess as to its composition. For instance, I have known medical men look, not only without displeasure, but with pleasure and approval, on a plaster which had been used

by old grandmothers, inherited from their own grandmothers. Within my own experience I have known such recipes make cures which the faculty have not been able to make. But sometimes these old-fashioned secrets have a darker history. People have left off believing in witchcraft and the evil eye, although there may be still some out-of-the-way places where this is the case to this very day. Occasionally, however, there is a belief, now very rarely found in any part of the country, but not totally extinct, that in such or such a family there may be the art of causing death by certain undiscoverable means. Most probably in the present state of science the so-thought undiscoverable means are coarse and easy of detection. It might happen that the secret of a poison may be in a family; a poison subtle and safe, or if coarse and common, there are people who have it, and are intrepidly wicked enough to use it. We know that in the Middle Ages the knowledge of certain poisons was confined to the members of some Italian families; a knowledge which was regarded as rare, precious, and profitable, and was turned to most lucrative account in what might be almost called a professional practice. Human nature is very much the same everywhere; it is the hardest thing in the world to kill out any special form of evil. It is my impression there are still a few families in whom lingers a special knowledge of poisons, and in the case of some depraved people a disposition to use them. Now, if this hypothesis, monstrous as I grant it to be, is true, we shall have the circumstance accounted for that here are two sisters apparently in possession of the dark art of slow poisoning, and actually using it."

"But what would be their object? Who would know of such wretched people and want to employ them?"

"You will observe that in these two cases we have an old woman and an old man, each childless, each evidently with considerable property. Somewhere there would be people who would profit largely by their deaths. Now go a step farther. Imagine the following combination of circumstances. First, that there is a family with a knowledge of a secret—or at least what they suppose to be a secret way of poisoning, with members wicked enough to use it. Secondly, that there are wicked people, in two different parts of the country who are at the same time calling in the aid of two members of

this family for a murderous purpose. Thirdly, that by a marvellous combination of circumstances, I was called into both of these cases. Such a combination of circumstances would yield an explanation of all the facts of the case."

"But such an explanation would be monstrously improbable."

"I grant it. But what you say, you will remember that I said myself just now. I do not guarantee my explanation of the facts. But I guarantee the facts themselves. In all probability they never will be explained. I shall always regard them as a Medical Mystery."

"Still, I think that both of these were cases which you ought to have handed over to the police."

"I think so too; but then, you see, I have always thought it best to set my face against the sensational."

It is not necessary to trouble my readers with any further particulars of the delightful fortnight which I spent with the distinguished physician. I failed to elicit any more narratives from him. But I thought this one so remarkable that I made copious notes, from which I have set in order this true unvarnished narrative.

YOUNG SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET.

"A PIRATED edition, probably from notes taken at the theatre: imperfect and worthless."

This was the verdict pronounced by the critics on a rare and curious Shakespearian "find," in the nature of what appeared to be, and in all probability was, the author's first sketch of the immortal tragedy of Hamlet. When the unique copy of this treasure came to light some fifty years ago (it was reprinted in 1825), these critics were incredulous of the value of what they held in their hands. True, the Duke of Devonshire secured the copy for a hundred guineas or thereabouts, as a curiosity of great interest; but its real worth long remained unrecognised, and there is not yet to be had, so far as we are aware, any variorum edition of Hamlet showing at a glance wherein this, the poet's first crude sketch, differed from his finished work.

Gradually, however, the claims of what is known as the Hamlet of 1603, because it was published one year before the perfect Hamlet of 1604, have come to be acknowledged. Many facts have caused

modern students to reject the conclusion originally drawn from the statement of the editors of the First Folio, that "his mind and hand went together, and what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." This was held—and might fairly be held—to mean that the great poet's works were poured forth as if by inspiration, without any need for recasting or revision, perfect as we now peruse them. This we now know was not the case. There is extant a first draft of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*; and the more closely the Hamlet of 1603 is studied, the more obvious will it become that it was the Hamlet originally given to the stage, with beauties and characteristics of its own, and capable of both illustrating the growth of the finished work, and of being used to throw light on some of its obscurities. That such a first sketch was published is obvious from the title-page of the edition of 1604, where it is distinctly stated that the tragedy is "enlarged to almost as much again as it was," and there is no reasonable doubt as to this being the sketch in question; while the theory of its being derived from imperfect notes taken down during representation is self-refuted, since it contains certain things not in the perfect play, yet undoubtedly Shakespeare's.

Holding this view, we are glad to find that the value of the sketch of 1603 has been distinctly recognised in the Lyceum edition of Hamlet prepared for Mr. Irving, whose marvellous rendering of the great character has invested everything connected with the tragedy with a new interest; and as the sketch is not generally accessible, a few words respecting it may interest. Mr. Knight held the theory that there was a yet earlier play on the subject, "wherein the poet may simply have proposed to exhibit in the young man a desire for revenge combined with irresolution, perhaps even actual madness;" and in which there was a total absence of the poetical and philosophical beauties of the perfect play. That such a work existed is generally admitted, the date assigned to it being 1589, when the poet was in his twenty-fifth year, but no copy is extant, and therefore this quarto of 1603 is the nearest approach we can make to the Young Shakespeare's Hamlet.

The opening scene of this most important and valuable relic is on the same lines as that with which we are familiar; but

there is an absence of the more characteristic touches. All is brief to crudeness. The verbal alterations may be guessed at from two lines which stand thus :

Thus twice before and "jump" at this dead hour
With martial stalk he [passed through our watch].

"Jump" for "just," and the half-line in brackets for "hath he gone by our watch." There is a total absence of the fine speech beginning :

In the most high and palmy state of Rome ;
the ghost re-entering in the midst of Horatio's explanations about Fortinbras. Indeed, the absence of the poetry which invests all the early scenes with such glamour is exceedingly noticeable. When the Court assemble, Laertes obtains the King's leave for his departure for France in these words :

With all our heart, Laertes, fare thee well ;
to which Laertes responds :

I, in all love and duty, take my leave ;
and goes at once, not waiting for the close of the scene. Then the King turns to Hamlet in these uncouth lines :

And now, princely son Hamlet,
What means these sad and melancholy words ?
For your intent, going to Wittenberg,
We hold it most unmeet and inconvenient,
Being the joy and half-heart of your mother ;
Therefore let me entreat you stay in Court,
All Denmark's hope, our cousin and dearest son.

Very crude this, and equally so the lines in place of the fine speech, " 'Tis not alone my inky cloak."

O, that this too much grieved and sallied flesh
Would melt to nothing, or that the universal
Globe of heaven would turn all to a chaos !
O God ! within two months ; no, not two. Married
Mine uncle ! O, let me not think of it,
My father's brother ; but no more like
My father, than I to Hercules, &c.

There is no trace of the manifold beauties which adorn the revised speech except the simile, "Like Niobe all tears." Equally poor is the original "To be or not to be." That speech occurs much earlier in the sketch than in the perfect play, just after Hamlet enters "poring upon a book," and assumes this form :

To be or not to be ? Aye, there's the point.
To die, to sleep—is that all ? Aye, all.
No, to sleep, to dream—aye, marry, there it goes,
For in that dream of death, when we awake
And borne before an everlasting Judge,
From whence no passenger ever returned,
The undiscovered country at whose sight
The happy smile, and th' accursed damn'd.
But for this, the joyful hope of this,
Who'd bear the scorns and flattering of the world,
Scorn'd by the right, the rich curs'd of the poor,
The widow being oppress'd, the orphan wrong'd,
The taste of hunger, or a tyrant's reign,
And thousand more calamities besides,

When that he may his full quietus make
With a bare bodkin ? Who would thus endure
But for a hope of something after death,
Which puzzles the brain, and doth confound the sense,
Which makes us rather bear the ills we have
Than fly to others which we know not of ?
Aye, that ? O, this conscience makes cowards of
us all !
Lady, in thy orisons, be all my sins remembered.

This is all ; all that we get of a soliloquy so glorious in its perfect form.

To revert for a moment to an earlier scene, it is specially worthy of notice that when Polonius (here called Corambis) gives his precepts to Laertes, they are marked as quotations. Now, it has been offered as a clue to the character of the old courtier that he is really what Hamlet here calls him, an "old, doting fool ;" but with a parrot-store of axioms and aphorisms, on the strength of which, combined with a long Court experience, he sets up as a paragon of wisdom. These quoted sayings would seem to confirm this idea, and suggest whether the old man's address to his son should not be more formal and pedantic in delivery than we usually have it. Significantly enough the quotation marks are retained when Corambis comes to speak with Ophelia in a passage which has not been retained :

Ophelia, receive none of his letters,
"For love's lines are snares to entrap the heart ;"
Refuse his tokens, both of them are keys
To unlock chastity, undo desire.
Come in, Ophelia, such men often prove
"Great in their words, but little in their love."

A great alteration is perceptible in the scene where Ophelia and her father next meet. He asks :

How now, Ophelia, what's the news with you ?

OPH. O my dear father, such a change in nature,
So great an alteration in a prince,
So pitiful in him, fearful to me,
A maiden's eye ne'er looked on.

COR. Why, what's the matter now, my Ophelia ?

OPH. O, young Prince Hamlet, the only flower of Denmark,

He is bereft of all the wealth he had,
The jewel that adorned his feature most
Is filcht and stolen away : his wit's bereft him.
He found me walking in the gallery all alone, &c.

She proceeds to tell of his treatment with some variations on the ordinary text, using one new, one especially beautiful line :

He doth unclasp his hold and parts away
Silent, as is the midtime of the night.

The advice to the players is printed as blank verse, though without any attempt at cutting up the lines so that they will scan. And in this part we get not only an absolute addition to what we had of Shakespeare ; but a peep at the license of the stage in his days. What is called "gagging" would seem to have been then,

as now, the sin of the clowns or low-comedians. Here we find an amplification of Hamlet's remarks about the clowns adhering to what is set down for them. He says:

And then you have some again, that keep one suit of jests, as a man is known by one suit of apparel, and gentlemen quote his jests down in their tables, before they come to the play, as thus, "Canst thou stay till I eat my porridge?" and "You owe me a quarter's wages," and "My coat wants a cullison," and "Your beer is sour," and blabbering with his lips, and thus keeping in his cinkapace of jests, when, God knows, the warm Clown cannot make a jest unless by chance, as the blind man catcheth a hare. Masters tell him of it.

Turning next to the play-scene, we find a very different state of things to that subsequently witnessed. The Player-King and Queen are called Duke and Duchess, and this is how the dialogue progresses:

DUKE. Full forty years are past, their date is gone,
Since happy time joined both our hearts as one:
And now the blood that filled my youthful veins
Runs weakly in their pipes, and all the strains
Of music, which whileome pleased mine ear
Is now a burden that age cannot bear,
And therefore, sweet, nature must pay his due,
To heaven must I and leave the earth with you.

DUCHESS. O, say not so, lest that you kill my heart,
When death takes you, let life from me depart.

DUKE. Content thyself: when ended is my date,
Thou may'st, perchance, have a more noble mate,
More wise, more youthful, and one—

DUCHESS. O, speak no more, for then I am accurst,
None weds the second, but she kills the first:

A second time I kill my lord that's dead,

When second husband kisses me in bed.

HAMLET. O wormwood, wormwood, &c.

It exhibits the artistic power of Shakespeare very strikingly when we find him expunging these flowing numbers, and using in their place stilted and bombastic verse in keeping with the speech first recited by the Player-King, in keeping also with what we may suppose to have been the style of the itinerant Thespians. As it stands now, this play within a play is entirely distinct in tone and character from the piece in which it occurs.

We have quoted enough to show the quality of the early Hamlet; the range of its value is not so easily indicated. To us it appears singularly important, as throwing light on many of the disputed problems of the tragedy. Volumes have been written on such points as: Was the madness of Hamlet wholly or only partially feigned? Was the Queen privy to the murder of her first husband? About Ophelia: Had her conduct been of a nature to warrant the serious apprehensions and jealous fears of her father and brother; and was she, as Hamlet suspected, a party to the conspiracy against him? As to the Queen's complicity with the

murder, that is strongly negatived in the sketch. She says distinctly:

But as I have a soul I swear by heaven
I never knew of this most horrid murder.

And she then proceeds in most explicit terms to promise Hamlet her assistance in avenging it. On the other points the light is more diffused, and it is impossible to indicate here the way in which this imperfect original will assist the student.

Looking to minor points, there are many of interest. The stage directions are not very numerous; but there is one which has justified Mr. Irving in giving effect to a point which has hitherto been neglected. When the ghost first appears, he is properly in armour. "My father's spirit in arms!" cries Hamlet. In the closet scene with the Queen, an exclamation again conveys the appearance of the ghost: "My father, in his habit as he lived!" and this is provided for in this quarto, where the words are: "Enter the ghost in his night-gown;" that is, in the robe or dressing-gown of domestic life, a direction omitted in the folios. Then as to new readings, one sample will suffice. When the players enter, Hamlet says: "What, my old friend, thy face is vallanced since I saw thee last: com'st thou to beard me in Denmark?" The folio has "valiant," which may be defended; but "vallanced" vividly describes a face with a beard hanging round it. At the end of the play, when the King rises in dismay, the half-line spoken by him is more explicit than the substituted one in use. It is not obvious to the audience why the King cries: "Give me some light. Away!" The original had it: "Lights! I will to bed." Curiously enough, in the directions for the dumb-show preceding the play within the play, "the King and the Queen" are mentioned; but when they come to speak they are called "the Duke and Duchess." Hamlet explains that "the play is the image of a murder done in Guyana," not Vienna, and calls the Duke Albertus instead of Gonzago. But the names throughout vary: Polonius is Corambis, Ophelia is spelt Ofelia, Laertes we find as Leartes, young Osric has no name—he is called "A Braggart Gentleman"—and the names of Hamlet's false friends are Rossencraft and Gilderstone.

One word more. Shakespeare was born in 1564, so that at the time when this edition appeared he would be in his thirty-ninth year. The very next year the complete tragedy was issued; that is, the quarto of 1604. But the title-page of this copy states that it is given "as it hath been

divers times acted by his highness's servants in the city of London; as also in the two universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elsewhere." The question is whether up to that time the perfect Hamlet had never been seen? The critics assign its revision to this very year, and it is quite possible that the publication of the work before us, if piratical, might have stimulated the poet to cast the play in a form more worthy of his powers, so that to this despised sketch we may actually owe the existence of the tragedy in its magnificent entirety. Of course, on the other hand, it is possible that it had been long recast, but never before printed. Our own opinion, however, is that the idea of Hamlet as the subject of a play, whether derived from Belleforest's novel or direct from Saxo Grammaticus, was from his youth a favourite one with Shakespeare; that he loved it, and had probably drawn out the draft of it as early as when he roved the fields about Charlecote with Anne Hathaway; that it influenced him in giving his son the remarkable name of Hamnet (if that is not a clerical error for Hamlet); and that he gradually worked on the idea as Goethe did on Faust, until, in 1604, it was given to the world in its abounding magnificence—the drama of the world. And since there is no real evidence on the subject—only stray facts and conjectures—we are disposed to look with doubt on surmises as to yet earlier drafts and less perfect skeletons, as also to treat with contempt the imperfect-note theory in relation to this edition (albeit there might have been publication without consent); and so it pleases us to regard this quarto of 1603 as in effect the work of the poet's youth, or, as we call it, Young Shakespeare's Hamlet.

ALL OR NOTHING.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," "GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE,"
 &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXX. "TOO LATE!"

"It is totally impossible for your uncle to go to her, and I'm sure I don't know what is to be done!"

Thus spoke Lady Rosa Chumleigh, in accents of dismay, to Julia Carmichael, some time after Sir Wilfrid Esdaile's telegram had reached Hunsford. The message arrived in the evening, and was received by Lady Rosa, in the absence of the colonel on the invalid list, and a prisoner to his room with a persistent fit of the gout, which severely tried Lady Rosa's temper. Julia

was with her, and it is needless to say that the intelligence of Mr. Thornton's death caused them both a great shock, and keen, though differently felt sorrow. Lady Rosa's heart was not sufficiently tender, nor was her imagination of a sufficiently vivid kind, to force her into a realisation of the grief and the terror of her daughter's position, so that she was not rendered powerless by the pain of such a picture in her mind. Happily her practical habits exerted their influence, and long before Julia could get beyond a horrified vision of Laura, and a dread of how this news might affect the colonel, Lady Rosa was revolving the question of the moment—what was to be done?

"Let me see the telegram again." Julia handed the green paper, on which she had been vacantly gazing, to Lady Rosa. "It does not say that Laura wishes her father to go to her. 'Colonel Chumleigh had better come as soon as possible;' that is Sir Wilfrid Esdaile's own message."

"Yes; but Laura would of course wish it. She would not have been able to send any message of her own; she would have known nothing, been consulted about nothing, under such circumstances."

"True. And there's no one there with any sense, I daresay; her servants are all fools, no doubt; besides, she could not be left to them at any rate."

"Sir Wilfrid has plenty of sense, and the kindest heart in the world; and there is her friend Mrs. Monroe, and that Miss Wells whom Laura said so much about in her last letter. She is not alone, thank Heaven; but still——"

"They are not her own people, and none of them can bring her home. What can be done? I cannot leave your uncle. And I am a wretched person on such occasions, even if I could go to Nice."

"Let me go," said Julia, by a sudden impulse. "My going will be better than nothing. I can take Freeman, and start to-morrow morning. My uncle will not object, I am sure. Do let me telegraph to Sir Wilfrid that I am coming."

On reflection this did seem to be the best thing that could be done, and Lady Rosa went to the colonel's room on the sad errand of telling him what had befallen his darling daughter.

The intelligence affected Colonel Chumleigh very deeply. He had liked Robert Thornton much, and trusted him thoroughly; he had felt perfect ease and security with regard to Laura, founded on the worth and the steadiness of her husband's character; and it had afforded him a

great deal of quiet pleasure to indulge in imaginary pictures—of which no one would have suspected Colonel Chumleigh—of Laura, her home, and her children, in the future years. In all the details of the house that was being prepared for her in London the colonel had taken the utmost interest, and his chief pleasure was the reading of the frequent long talky letters, as Laura called them, that she wrote to him from the various points of her foreign sojourn. He remembered with a pang what a continuous record of Robert Thornton's love and care, of her own happiness and prosperity, those letters formed; he murmured impatiently against the pain and helplessness that held him back from his poor child—his bright Firefly, with her wings so sadly singed—wondering how it was with her, whether in her youth and strength she had found a resource against the dread and the anguish that had overtaken her, sufficient at least to prevent her from being quite prostrated by them. The most difficult thing for Lady Rosa and the colonel was to realise that the dreadful event had happened so recently, that their daughter's widowhood was not yet two days old. Like all who hear of a calamity at a distance, they felt at first as if it were impossible, then as if it had happened long ago. The colonel's distress at being unable to go to Laura was keen, and he immediately assented to Julia's undertaking the journey that was impossible to himself.

Many hours of the night passed in dreary conjecture and sorrowful reminiscence. They were not unmindful of Miss Thornton, and wondered whether the sad intelligence had yet been communicated to her. And then they remembered what a great significance, in addition to its sadness, the death of her nephew would have for the old lady in the lonely house in Scotland.

"To think," said Lady Rosa, "that so much depends upon Laura's health holding out now. If the baby is not born, or does not live, the poor old lady will be a very rich woman. However, there's one comfort, she would certainly leave it all to Laura. She cared for nobody but Robert, and he cared for nobody but Laura, so that she will be safe, I should think, in any case. It will make a terrible difference to her though, if she has to come in after the old lady. Of course there will be no change in any way, until the child comes to settle everything."

At this point the colonel ceased to be able to follow the speculations of Lady Rosa. He could only dwell on the cruel destruction that might come to all the hopes of

his daughter, on his own fears for her health, on the sudden setting of the sun on so fair a day, and his dread that to the early fallen night might be added a deeper darkness still. He was growing old, and Laura might be left without her father before long, and her mother and she never agreed, even when Laura was a girl at home, and had acted, very much for his sake, on the principle of "anything for a quiet life." The colonel was deeply troubled; so deeply that it seemed to him all that had troubled him previously in his life had been mere vexations. His son's boyish mischief, Lady Rosa's railing, the "tightness" of money from which he had never been quite delivered: all these seemed of little account to him now, when one of the really tragic events of human existence came full upon his intimate perception, and the person concerned most nearly was the darling of his own heart.

It had occurred to Julia that it would be well to give Sir Wilfrid Esdaile an opportunity of communicating with her, in case there should be anything that Laura wanted, and she had telegraphed that on reaching London she would go to Mr. Thornton's house in Prince's Gardens. This she accordingly did, and was received by the housekeeper, who handed her a second telegram from Sir Wilfrid, to the effect that Laura was pretty well, and most thankful to know that her cousin was coming to her. The housekeeper informed her that she had been instructed to prepare for the reception of Mrs. Thornton, who would come to London as soon as she was able to travel.

"And a sad coming home too," she added.

Julia had to dispose of some hours before she could start for Dover, and she employed a portion of the time in going over the house. It was with a half stunned feeling, in which there seemed to be an unreal, impossible side to the awful reality that was oppressing her mind, that she wandered through the rooms.

Though the smaller touches of individual taste, and the comfortable air of habitation were wanting to the house, it had not the more formal and staring grandeur of a mansion which has been fitted up by a fashionable upholsterer, according to a hardly-limited order. The decorations and the furniture were neither slavish in their following of a school, nor fantastic in the avoidance of sameness, and there was nothing to mark the vulgar exaltation of wealth in the beautiful, costly, but

simple abode which the son of the self-made man had prepared for his wife. Not the strictest or the most exclusive of the noble Nesses could have desired a more perfect suite of rooms for herself, than that of which Robert Thornton had carefully considered all the details that were to render them worthy of his Laura; not the self-made man, Robert's father himself, in the old days at Bedford Square, had been content with plainer furniture, and simpler surroundings, than those of the rooms intended for the master of the house. Julia recognised the manliness and simplicity which she had admired in the friend they had all lost when she passed through his "own rooms," which were never to know him, with the pain of that loss at her heart, and saw how they testified to his contempt for the effeminacy and self-indulgence of the day. The only articles de luxe in the "own rooms" of the master were books. Of them there was a noble store; one that would have astonished the self-made man, who in his time had not held with books, with which, indeed, the origin of his fortunes had had no connection. His portrait, in a brown coat, and a wig of the same colour, and seemingly similar texture, occupied a place of honour in the study, and Julia recognised in that fact also a trait of Robert Thornton's character.

Julia had completed her survey of the upper rooms, and was getting ready to resume her journey, when another message reached her. This time the sender was Laura herself. "Pray rest for a few hours in Paris. Rooms are retained for me at Meurice's. Go there, and come on by the night train."

Julia's first idea was to disregard this injunction. She did not think she should be tired, and her chief object was to reach Laura with as little delay as possible. She reckoned, however, without that troublesome element, her maid. Absorbed in anticipation of the scene to which she was hastening, busy with the past and the future, Julia did not think about the weather, and was indifferent to fatigue; but Freeman had no such motives for rising above circumstances, and she arrived in Paris in a state of physical and moral limpness, which reduced Julia to the alternative of giving her time to recover herself, or going on without her. She would have preferred to do the latter, but prudence prevailed, and she drove to Meurice's, so heavy of heart, so weary of eye, that the fresh and sunny beauty of

the lovely city passed before her utterly unheeded, though seen for the first time.

Partly in rest, partly in writing to John Sandilands, Julia passed the interval before she could resume her journey. When she had finished her letter, she took it herself to the bureau of the hotel, and while she was asking about the necessary postage-stamp, and the time of departure of the mail, a lady and gentleman, who had just alighted from a carriage at the entrance, passed through the hall towards a staircase on the right. The lady's face was turned away, but her tall slight figure seemed familiar to Julia, also the rich chestnut curls that clustered at the back of her neck, and showed brightly against the deep blue of her velvet dress. She had but a glimpse of them; the next moment the lady had passed out of sight, and the gentleman coming back across the hall, met Julia face to face.

The gentleman was Captain Dunstan. It gave her a strange shock and pain to recognise him; the recollection of him had never crossed her mind among all the thoughts that had occupied it since the news came.

"Miss Carmichael! You in Paris! This is an unexpected pleasure."

This hurriedly, while they shook hands, and he saw by her face that there was something wrong.

"Mrs. Dunstan will be delighted. Is your party staying here?"

Julia had not spoken yet an intelligible word. She now said she was merely passing through Paris on her way to Nice, to join her cousin, Mrs. Thornton. Perhaps Captain Dunstan had heard?

No; he had heard nothing. Had anything happened? There were several people near, and recollection had come to Julia in a full tide. She could not speak of her errand there; so she asked Captain Dunstan to accompany her to Mrs. Thornton's rooms. Greatly wondering, he did so; and then Julia told him, told him with far more agitation than she had betrayed since the intelligence had reached Lady Rosa and herself. The mere passing of the knowledge on to another person who also knew Laura, seemed to break through her enforced composure.

But the tears with which she told the story of Robert Thornton's death, and her own errand, were quickly arrested by her astonishment at the effect of the communication upon Captain Dunstan. His quiet, rather languid manner had never given her the impression that he had much

feeling in him, or the gift of profound sympathy. What was this which shook him now, which drove every tinge of colour from his face, and set his hands and lips trembling; which made him hardly able to utter the commonplace, "Very sorry, a dreadful event indeed!" He stood for a few seconds after she told him, then sat down and hid his face in his hands.

What could it mean, Julia asked herself, either that he should feel so much about this calamity, or that he should betray the feeling to her, between whom and himself there had been no confidence or particular friendship? But she could not answer her own question, or ask it of him; and presently he spoke again, in a vague kind of way, about her journey and her plans, asking when she would be in Paris again.

"I don't know," Julia answered. "I am quite ignorant as yet of my cousin's intentions, except that she is expected at her house in London. I conclude she will return as soon as she is able to travel."

"And she—Mrs. Thornton—is alone there?"

"But for her friends, yes. But, now that I think of it, I am surprised you had not heard, for Mrs. Monroe is with her, as well as Sir Wilfrid Esdaile."

"Esdaile! He there! How came he to be with them—with Mrs. Thornton?"

"Did you not know? I have not told you the story clearly. He was on board the yacht when it happened. It was he who sent the news to us. He had been a great deal with them of late."

"I have not heard of him for some time."

Again a spasm of pain seemed to seize him, changing all his features by its grip.

"I am sure he has been most kind. I don't know what would have become of my poor cousin if she had not had a friend."

"Ah," he interrupted her, "that will not bear talking of. And now, about yourself. You will not be starting for another hour, you will let Mrs. Dunstan be with you for that time. I have unfortunately an engagement which I must keep"—he was striving hard for composure, with little success, and Julia felt that he could see her wonder—"but I will send for her to come to you, or perhaps you would go to her. She has just come in; you will have some tea with her."

"No," said Julia, speaking on an impulse which in the time to come she remembered well; "I would really rather not, if you please. I don't feel able to see her; I could not bear to make her so unhappy as she would be—for I know how she feels for others—at our first meeting. Pray don't ask me to see her, Captain Dunstan; pray don't trouble her by letting her know I am here. She does not know my cousin; she did not know the poor fellow who is gone; she will not be upset by hearing of it only in the ordinary course. I would have no right to trouble and grieve her; and, indeed, it would distress me more, and make me less fit for my journey. Tell her afterwards, give her my love, and say to her that we shall meet in London. I am sure to be with my cousin there."

"If you are quite sure you would rather not—"

"I am, indeed, quite sure. And pray say nothing to Mrs. Dunstan. She might be hurt; she might not understand; but indeed I could not see her. And I know you will excuse me if I ask you to leave me now; I have several things to attend to before I go."

She held out her hand in farewell, and he took it in silence. When he had left the room Julia felt oppressed by the sense that there was a sort of secret which she understood but dimly, if at all, between herself and Captain Dunstan.

He went to the bureau, wrote a line upon a card, and sent it to his wife; then went out, across the busy Rue de Rivoli, all alive with the bustle and gaiety of Paris in the springtide, into the gardens of the Tuileries. He walked like a man in a hurry, like a man pursued, but it was not on account of the engagement of which he had spoken to Julia; for when he had reached the river terrace, he went no farther, but walked up and down under the tender green canopy of the prim beautiful trees, heedless of the loiterers there, many of whom looked enquiringly at his handsome weary face, with the bent brows and the frowning troubled eyes. There were many elements in the storm that was let loose in his heart—rage, pity, forbidden love, resentment against his fate—and their work was wild with him; as all their voices gathered into one utterance, which drove and goaded him by its intolerable whisper, "Too late; too late!"

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IMPORTANT FAMILY MEDICINE.

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CAMOMILE PILLS,

THE

MOST CERTAIN PRESERVER OF HEALTH,

A MILD, YET SPEEDY, SAFE, AND

EFFECTUAL AID IN CASES OF INDIGESTION

AND ALL STOMACH COMPLAINTS,

AND, AS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE, A

PURIFIER OF THE BLOOD AND SWEETENER OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM.

INDIGESTION is a weakness or want of power of the digestive juices in the stomach to convert what we eat and drink into healthy matter for the proper nourishment of the whole system. It is caused by everything which weakens the system in general, or the stomach in particular. From it proceed nearly all the diseases to which we are liable; for it is very certain that if we could always keep the stomach right we should only die by old age or accident. Indigestion produces a great variety of unpleasant sensations; amongst the most prominent of its miserable effects are a want of, or an inordinate appetite, sometimes attended with a constant craving for drink, a distension or feeling of enlargement of the stomach, flatulency, heartburn, pain in the stomach, acidity, unpleasant taste in the mouth, perhaps sickness, rumbling noise in the bowels; in some cases of depraved digestion there is nearly a complete disrelish for food, but still the appetite is not greatly impaired, as at the stated period of meals persons so afflicted can eat heartily, although without much gratification; a long train of nervous symptoms are also frequent attendants, general debility, great languidness, and incapacity for exertion. The minds of persons so afflicted frequently become irritable and desponding, and great anxiety is observable in the countenance; they appear thoughtful, melancholy, and dejected, under great apprehension of some imaginary danger, will start at any unexpected noise or occurrence, and become so agitated that they require some time to calm and collect themselves; yet for all this the mind is exhilarated

without much difficulty; pleasing events, society, will for a time dissipate all appearance of disease; but the excitement produced by an agreeable change vanishes soon after the cause has gone by. Other symptoms are, violent palpitations, restlessness, the sleep disturbed by frightful dreams and startings, and affording little or no refreshment; occasionally there is much moaning, with a sense of weight and oppression upon the chest, nightmare, &c.

It is almost impossible to enumerate all the symptoms of this first invader upon the constitution, as in a hundred cases of *Indigestion* there will probably be something peculiar to each; but be they what they may, they are all occasioned by the food becoming a burden rather than a support to the stomach; and in all its stages the medicine most wanted is that which will afford speedy and effectual assistance to the digestive organs, and give energy to the nervous and muscular systems—nothing can more speedily, or with more certainty, effect so desirable an object than *Norton's Extract of Camomile Flowers*. The herb has from time immemorial been highly esteemed in England as a grateful anodyne, imparting an aromatic bitter to the taste and a pleasing degree of warmth and strength to the stomach; and in all cases of indigestion, gout in the stomach, windy colic, and general weakness, it has for ages been strongly recommended by the most eminent practitioners as very useful and beneficial. The great, indeed only, objection to its use has been the large quantity of water which it takes to dissolve a small part of the flowers and

which must be taken with it into the stomach. It requires a quarter of a pint of boiling water to dissolve the soluble portion of one drachm of *Camomile Flowers*; and when one or even two ounces may be taken with advantage, it must at once be seen how impossible it is to take a proper dose of this wholesome herb in the form of tea; and the only reason why it has not long since been placed the very first in rank of all restorative medicines is, that in taking it the stomach has always been loaded with water, which tends in a great measure to counteract, and very frequently wholly to destroy the effect. It must be evident that loading a weak stomach with a large quantity of water, merely for the purpose of conveying into it a small quantity of medicine, must be injurious; and that the medicine must possess powerful renovating properties only to counteract the bad effects likely to be produced by the water. Generally speaking, this has been the case with *Camomile Flowers*, a herb possessing the highest restorative qualities, and when properly taken, decidedly the most speedy restorer, and the most certain preserver of health.

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS

are prepared by a peculiar process, accidentally discovered, and known only to the proprietor, and which he firmly believes to be one of the most valuable modern discoveries in medicine, by which all the essential and extractive matter of more than an ounce of the flowers is concentrated in four moderate-sized pills. Experience has afforded the most ample proof that they possess all the fine aromatic and stomachic properties for which the herb has been esteemed; and, as they are taken into the stomach unencumbered by any diluting or indigestible substance, in the same degree has their benefit been more immediate and decided. Mild in their operation and pleasant in their effect, they may be taken at any age, and under any circumstances, without danger or inconvenience. A person exposed to cold and wet a whole day or night could not possibly receive any injury from taking them, but, on the contrary, they would effectually prevent a cold being taken. After a long acquaintance with and strict observance of the medicinal properties of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, it is only doing them justice to say, that they are really the most valuable of all TONIC MEDICINES. By the word tonic is meant a medicine

which gives strength to the stomach sufficient to digest in proper quantities all wholesome food, which increases the power of every nerve and muscle of the human body, or, in other words, invigorates the nervous and muscular systems. The solidity or firmness of the whole tissue of the body, which so quickly follows the use of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, their certain and speedy effect in repairing the partial dilapidations from time or intemperance, and their lasting salutary influence on the whole frame, is most convincing, that in the smallest compass is contained the largest quantity of the tonic principle, of so peculiar a nature as to pervade the whole system, through which it diffuses health and strength sufficient to resist the formation of disease, and also to fortify the constitution against contagion; as such their general use is strongly recommended as a preventative during the prevalence of malignant fever or other infectious diseases, and to persons attending sick-rooms they are invaluable, as in no one instance have they ever failed in preventing the taking of illness, even under the most trying circumstances.

As *Norton's Camomile Pills* are particularly recommended for all stomach complaints or indigestion, it will probably be expected that some advice should be given respecting diet, though after all that has been written upon the subject, after the publication of volume upon volume, after the country has, as it were, been inundated with practical essays on diet as a means of prolonging life, it would be unnecessary to say more, did we not feel it our duty to make the humble endeavour of inducing the public to regard them not, but to adopt that course which is dictated by nature, by reason, and by common sense. Those persons who study the wholesomes, and are governed by the opinion of writers on diet, are uniformly both unhealthy in body and weak in mind. There can be no doubt that the palate is designed to inform us what is proper for the stomach, and of course that must best instruct us what food to take and what to avoid; we want no other adviser. Nothing can be more clear than that those articles which are agreeable to the taste were by nature intended for our food and sustenance, whether liquid or solid, foreign or of native production; if they are pure and unadulterated, no harm need be dreaded by

their use; they will only injure by abuse. Consequently, whatever the palate approves, eat and drink always in moderation, but never in excess; keeping in mind that the first process of digestion is performed in the mouth, the second in the stomach; and that, in order that the stomach may be able to do its work properly, it is requisite the first process should be well performed; this consists in masticating or chewing the solid food, so as to break down and separate the fibres and small substances of meat and vegetable, mixing them well, and blending the whole together before they are swallowed; and it is particularly urged upon all to take plenty of time to their meals and never eat in haste. If you conform to this short and simple, but comprehensive advice, and find that there are various things which others eat and drink with pleasure and without inconvenience, and which would be pleasant to yourself only that they disagree, you may at once conclude that the fault is in the stomach, that it does not possess the power which it ought to do, that it wants assistance, and the sooner that assistance is afforded the better. A very short trial of this medicine will best prove how soon it will put the stomach in a condition to perform with ease all the work which nature intended for it. By its use you will soon be able to enjoy, in moderation, whatever is agreeable to the taste, and unable to name one individual article of food which disagrees with or sits unpleasantly on the stomach. Never forget that a small meal well digested affords more nourishment to the system than a large one, even of the same food, when digested imperfectly. Let the dish be ever so delicious, ever so enticing a variety offered, the bottle ever so enchanting, never forget that temperance tends to preserve health, and that health is the soul of enjoyment. But should an impropriety be at any time, or ever so often committed, by which the stomach becomes overloaded or disordered, render it immediate aid by taking a dose of *Norton's Camomile Pills*, which will so promptly assist in carrying off the bur-

den thus imposed upon it, that all will soon be right again.

It is most certainly true that every person in his lifetime consumes a quantity of noxious matter, which if taken at one meal would be fatal: it is these small quantities of noxious matter, which are introduced into our food, either by accident or wilful adulteration; which we find so often upset the stomach, and not unfrequently lay the foundation of illness, and perhaps final ruination to health. To preserve the constitution, it should be our constant care, if possible, to counteract the effect of these small quantities of unwholesome matter; and whenever, in that way, an enemy to the constitution finds its way into the stomach, a friend should immediately be sent after it, which would prevent its mischievous effects, and expel it altogether; no better friend can be found—no, none which will perform the task with greater certainty, than **NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS**. And let it be observed, that the longer this medicine is taken the less it will be wanted, and it can in no case become habitual, as its entire action is to give energy and force to the stomach, which is the spring of life, the source from which the whole frame draws its succour and support. After an excess of eating or drinking, and upon every occasion of the general health being at all disturbed, these PILLS should be immediately taken, as they will stop and eradicate disease at its commencement. Indeed, it is most confidently asserted that, by the timely use of this medicine only, and a common degree of caution, any person may enjoy all the comforts within his reach, may pass through life without an illness, and with the certainty of attaining a healthy **OLD AGE**.

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* Invalids should read Crosby's Prize Treatise on "DISEASES OF THE LUNGS AND AIR-VESSELS," a copy of which can be had GRATIS of all Chemists.